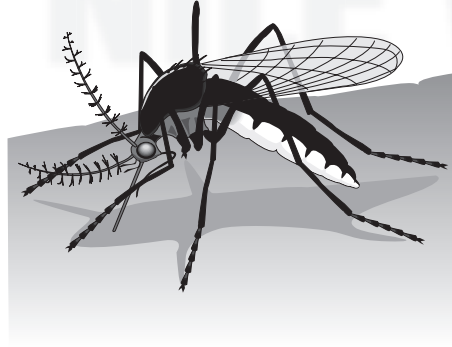


General Information About *West Nile Virus*



What is West Nile virus?

West Nile is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) in humans.

How is West Nile virus spread?

West Nile virus is spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito becomes infected by biting a bird that is carrying the virus. West Nile virus is *not* spread by person-to-person contact such as touching, kissing, or caring for someone who is infected.

Can you get West Nile virus directly from birds?

There is currently no evidence that West Nile virus can be spread directly from birds to people. However, dead birds can carry a variety of diseases and should never be handled with bare hands. Use gloves to carefully place dead birds in double-plastic bags and then place in the outdoor trash.

Besides mosquitoes, can you get West Nile virus directly from other insects or ticks?

Infected mosquitoes are the primary source of West Nile virus and they only transmit the disease by biting a person, horse or bird. There is no evidence to suggest that other insects or ticks transmit West Nile virus.

Are older adults more at risk for West Nile viral disease?

Yes. While the chance of anyone becoming infected with West Nile virus is very low, most of the cases on the east coast have occurred in people older than 50. People in this age group, especially the elderly, are also more likely to develop severe disease, such as encephalitis or meningitis, if they become infected.

Where did West Nile virus come from?

Outbreaks of West Nile viral disease have occurred in Israel, Egypt, Romania, Russia, France, parts of Asia and Africa. Before 1999, however, West Nile virus had never before been found in the Americas. The most likely explanation for its appearance in the United States is that the virus was introduced by importation of an infected bird or an infected person returning from a country where the virus is common.

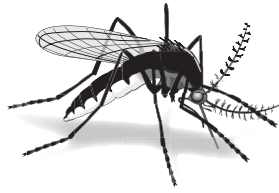
What are the symptoms of West Nile viral infection?

Most people who are infected with West Nile virus either have no symptoms or experience mild illness such as a fever, headache and body aches before fully recovering. Some persons also develop mild rash or swollen lymph glands. In some individuals, particularly the elderly, West Nile virus can cause serious disease that affects brain tissue. At its most serious, it can cause permanent neurological damage and can be fatal. Symptoms of encephalitis include the rapid onset of severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, muscle weakness, confusion, loss of consciousness or coma.

How is West Nile encephalitis treated?

There is no specific therapy. In more severe cases, intensive supportive therapy is administered, including hospitalization, intravenous fluids and nutrition, airway management, ventilatory support (ventilator), prevention of secondary infections such as pneumonia, urinary tract, etc., and good nursing care.





Is there a vaccine against West Nile virus?

No. A vaccine for West Nile virus in humans does not exist. A vaccine for West Nile virus in horses is currently on trial around the country.

How long does it take to get sick if bitten by an infected mosquito?

Being bitten by an infected mosquito will not necessarily make you sick. Most people who are infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms or experience only mild illness. If illness were to occur, it would occur within 3 to 15 days of being bitten by an infected mosquito.

What should I do if I think I have West Nile encephalitis?

If you develop signs of encephalitis, with fever, muscle weakness, and confusion, you should seek medical care immediately.

What can I do to reduce my risk of becoming infected with West Nile virus?

In spring through fall seasons, when mosquitoes are most active from dusk to dawn, people should wear protective clothing, such as long pants, loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts, and socks, and consider using insect repellent containing DEET (*N,N*-diethyl-meta-toluamide). **Use DEET according to manufacturer's directions on the label.**

What can I do around my home to help reduce exposure to mosquitoes?

Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water such as fish ponds, bird baths, old tires, cans and unused swimming pools or slow-moving water such as streams or creeks. Weeds, tall grass, and bushes provide an outdoor home for adult mosquitoes. They can enter homes through unscreened windows or doors, or broken screens.

What is the County Vector Control Program doing to address the problem of West Nile virus?

The San Bernardino County Vector Control Program, along with the California Department of Health Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has developed a comprehensive monitoring and surveillance plan to detect West Nile virus whenever it arrives in the county and limit the residents' risk of exposure to the infection. Vector Control Program routinely tests for West Nile Virus in sentinel chicken flocks maintained at various sites in the county and mosquito populations collected throughout the county. Sick, dying or dead birds that meet certain collection guidelines are also tested for West Nile virus.

I've gotten a mosquito bite. Should I be tested for West Nile virus?

No. Illnesses related to mosquito bites are still uncommon. However, you should see a doctor immediately if you develop symptoms such as high fever, confusion, muscle weakness, severe headaches, stiff neck, or if your eyes become sensitive to light. Illness may be due to other mosquito-transmitted viruses like Saint Louis Encephalitis or Western Equine Encephalomyelitis, infections common in Southern California mosquitoes.

Should I report dead birds to the San Bernardino County Vector Control Program?

The Vector Control Program encourages county residents to report all **dead birds**, especially crows, to San Bernardino County Vector Control Program during regular business hours. On weekends or after hours call toll free 1-877-WNV-BIRD. This will assist us in our efforts to monitor possible West Nile virus activity.

For more information about West Nile virus, contact



**San Bernardino County
Vector Control Program**

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